

A MASTER PLAN FOR THE
NEW JERSEY TRANSPORTATION
HERITAGE CENTER

THE SATELLITE NETCONG SITE



FOR THE
NEW JERSEY RAILROAD &
TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM COMMISSION
AND
NEW JERSEY TRANSIT

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*The New Jersey Transportation Heritage
Center Satellite at Netcong*

*This is the story of how New Jersey Shaped Transportation History and how
Transportation Shaped the Garden State.*



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Summary

Introduction

Few states can equal New Jersey's rich transportation heritage but up to now, we have lacked the means to tell the story. New Jersey residents have had to go to neighboring states to learn about New Jersey's transportation and its role in creating the New Jersey we enjoy today. That is about to change dramatically.

The proposed New Jersey Transportation Heritage Center will provide New Jersey with a unique cultural attraction. With a primary facility located in Phillipsburg, and a satellite facility in Netcong, the Heritage Center will showcase the extensive history of surface transportation in New Jersey and its relationship to the development of the Garden State. Creation of the Heritage Center will allow New Jersey to compete successfully for tourism and recreational dollars now expended in neighboring states. It will enable New Jerseyans to enjoy their transportation heritage without having to travel outside the State as is now the case.

The New Jersey Transportation Heritage Center is conceived as an exciting interactive experience that families will find both educational and entertaining. The Heritage Center will employ state-of-the-art interpretive exhibits that feature operating historical vehicles including horse drawn carriages, trolleys and railroad excursions, providing visitors with dynamic experiences that will encourage repeat visits.

Section 1

The Master Planning Process

The original New Jersey Railroad and Transportation Museum Study Commission was created in 1987 to study the feasibility of establishing a railroad and transportation museum in New Jersey. Early in its deliberations the Study Commission concluded that a museum experience was long overdue. Its focus would be surface transportation, including railroad, railroad marine service, ferries, street railways, motor buses, canals, motor freight and toll roads. Subsequently the present New Jersey Railroad and Transportation Commission, established in 1993, considered proposals for host sites for the Heritage Center. In 1999 the Commission successfully received approval and funding from the State Legislature for development of a Master Plan for the Phillipsburg site and planning for a satellite facility in Netcong.

In late 1999 the Commission, with New Jersey Transit as the contracting agency, authorized the preparation of a four-month study to develop a Master Plan for the Phillipsburg site, and an additional month to investigate how the community of Netcong might be tied in to the museum experience. As part of the Heritage Center, Netcong will benefit from additional visitors and expenditures made in the businesses in the immediate area. A Master Planning Team, led by Wallace Roberts & Todd,

LLC (WRT), was engaged by NJ Transit to work with the Commission to develop these plans. The Commission also asked the Master Planning Team to investigate the feasibility of weekend rail excursions between Netcong and Phillipsburg.

The Museum Commission's Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) guided the preparation of the Master Plan. During this process interviews were conducted with key individuals from Warren County, Phillipsburg, Easton, PA, and Netcong. As the Master Plan was being developed several forums were held in Phillipsburg in order to receive public comment. During this process local officials and other stakeholders offered suggestions and voiced their enthusiastic support for the New Jersey Transportation Heritage Center. This is the report on the satellite facility in Netcong.

Section 2

The Heritage Center Mission

The Commission has established the following Mission Statement for the Heritage Center:

TO EDUCATE *the general public about the important role that mass land-based transportation has played in shaping New Jersey's social, economic and environmental character.*

TO PRESERVE *artifacts and records that delineate and dramatize this role, both to interpret its contributions to the general public and to support the research of transportation historians, whether professional or amateur.*

TO FOSTER PUBLIC AWARENESS *and appreciation of New Jersey's leadership role in the development of transportation technology.*

Section 3

Design Concept

As an organizing theme for the exhibit and building designs the Master Planning Team developed a core message for the Heritage Center:

This is the story of how New Jersey shaped transportation history and how transportation shaped the Garden State.

Every exhibit element, from traditional artifacts and text panels, to interactive audio-visual terminals, and the buildings that comprise the Heritage Center will be designed to support this core message.

As a successful attraction, the Heritage Center will offer a rewarding visitor experience to a broad spectrum of the population. This will be accomplished

through the telling of “intriguing stories” that reflect the many roles played by New Jersey throughout its history. These stories will relate to the following themes:

- *New Jersey as a Technological Showcase State*
- *New Jersey as a Corridor State*
- *New Jersey as a Terminus State*
- *New Jersey as a Commuter State*
- *New Jersey as a Vacation/Playground State*
- *New Jersey as a Popular Culture State*
- *New Jersey as the Garden State*
- *New Jersey as a Crossroads State*

Section 4

The Site

Netcong, located approximately 27 miles northeast of the Heritage Center in Phillipsburg, has both an active traditional commuter rail line to Hoboken via New Jersey Transit and an attractive commuter rail station near Main Street and State Route 46. The station provides access to two levels of the site and is served by a single track line on the upper level with the station waiting room and commuter parking on the lower level.

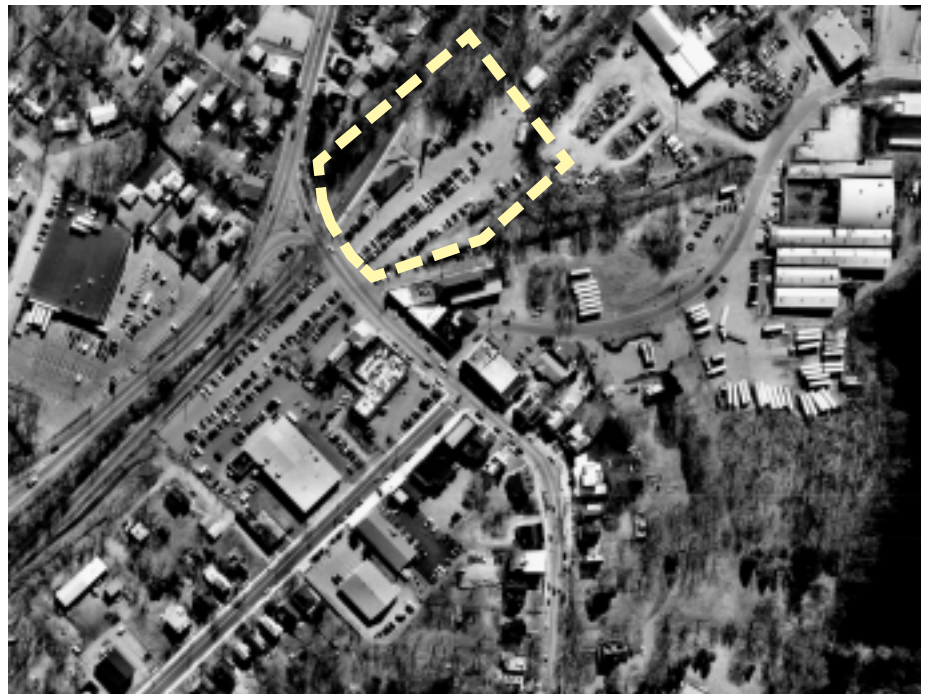


Figure 1. Aerial View of the Netcong Site



Figure 2. The Netcong Area

Section 5

The station parking is utilized fairly heavily during the workweek, however it represents a parking resource on weekends when the commuter service is not operated. Future plans for development of this site into a commercial area include expansion of the parking capacity and will provide additional weekday exposure to the satellite facility and potential for expansion of the rail excursions originating or arriving at Netcong.

Visitors will arrive at the site by automobile, charter bus, or rail excursion. Netcong is easily accessible by automobile from Interstate 80, and from U.S. Route 206.

Establishing Netcong as part of the overall experience of transportation in New Jersey provides an additional rail terminal for railroad excursions that would take visitors to and from the core Heritage Center complex in Phillipsburg. The ability to run regular or semi-regular rail passenger excursions over the rail line between the two communities would require the concurrence of the Norfolk Southern Corporation and New Jersey Transit. Two existing rail excursion routes, and a third potential route, are possible from the site using existing rail rights-of-way.

Visitor Experience

There is an opportunity for additional interpretation of the story of development over time of the many modes of transportation found in New Jersey within the confines of the Netcong passenger station. This early twentieth century, two-story station is presently owned by New Jersey Transit and is generally underutilized, though the exterior of the building and grounds are well maintained. Parking for in excess of 100 vehicles is immediately available adjacent to the train station, accessed from Main Street. While parking availability is limited during the week by commuters using the rail line, most of the parking is available on weekends.



Figure 3. A New Jersey Vintage Caboose

Section 6



Figure 4. Netcong Excursion Station

The consultant team recommends the following actions to enhance the visitor experience in the Netcong station area:

The Exterior Exhibits

Creation of the Heritage Center will permit the consolidation of the collection of railroad locomotives and rolling stock, buses, trucks, trolleys and historic streetcars and other vehicles and artifacts. Much of the rolling stock is held by the United Railroad Historical Society of New Jersey. The site in Netcong is well suited for display of selected artifacts and one or two pieces of rolling stock appropriate to Netcong, perhaps a caboose. Two possible locations adjacent to the station have been identified for the rolling stock: The caboose should be located at a place across the track and near Main Street, so as to be visible from State Highway Route 46. The car would be placed on a section of track and would be secured to the rail by brakes and by physically welding the wheels to the rail. The caboose should be fully restored and painted in the herald and colors of the Lackawanna Railroad, the historic railroad company that served Netcong. The caboose interior may be viewable, but would be secured and not open for visitation, serving primarily as an “attractor” to the station site. The other piece of equipment would be at the lower station level, adjacent to the existing commuter parking lot. This item could serve as a functional display.

Section 7

The Interior Exhibits

There is adequate room in the Netcong Station in both the Waiting Room and in the former Ticket Master’s office for the display of interpretive materials. The Waiting Room retains its original high ceiling and could accommodate tall exhibits. There are several existing radiators, served with unsightly plumbing, located in the center of the space. We recommend that a new scheme for providing heat in the Waiting Room be devised to relocate these radiators and their supply plumbing so that exhibits and seating can be installed. Development of a 300 to 400 square foot exhibit within the station is possible. These exhibits would include interpretive text, imagery, artifacts and dioramas relating to the development of a “typical” New Jersey bedroom or commuter community.

On entering the station, visitors would first encounter interpretive text and large wall photomurals describing briefly the history of Netcong and Roxbury and their growth as commuter suburbs. The history of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad and Morris Canal would be interpreted as it relates directly to the service (passenger and freight) provided at Netcong. A diorama of the rail line and community, showing its relationship to the rest of the State, would help place this story in the context of the larger story of New Jersey’s growth and development.

Visitors would next encounter a touch-screen interactive computer display where they would be able to compare the time and cost of traveling between two cities in New Jersey via canal, stage coach, automobile, bus and train. The first or “attract” screen would be a map of the state of New Jersey, inviting visitors to play the interactive. By touching any two-city points (extending beyond New Jersey to New York City and Philadelphia), the visitor could compare the cost and time of travel between the two points via a variety of modes. The goal here is to reinforce the fact that the steam and electric railroads provided the impetus for large-scale suburban development.

Artifact cases, interspersed with text, will highlight the region and local community. An audio-visual interactive display station would play segments of oral histories of actual local residents and railroad employees who worked in or through Netcong. They would describe their experiences in commuting and living in Netcong.

Finally, information on the core Transportation Heritage Center in Phillipsburg would be provided, along with a discount coupon for admission to the Phillipsburg site. Tickets for excursions to Phillipsburg would be sold on days when that excursion is available.

Estimated Costs

We estimate that it will cost in the range of \$400,000 to \$420,000 to design and prepare the Netcong satellite facility and to construct and install the interior and exterior exhibits.

Summary

In summary, the consultant team believes that the story of transportation is best interpreted in multiple locations, as transportation, by its nature, is an experience of movement between places. The location of the Netcong station on an active rail line, immediately adjacent to a major highway route provides a great opportunity to the Transportation Heritage Center by making for a stronger, more viable project while adding value to the Netcong community.